DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 685 PL 024 737

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Smith, Craig |
| TITLE | Teaching Children To Read in the Second Language. Monographs on Bilingualism No. 1. |
| INSTITUTION | Japan Association of Language Teachers, Okinawa. |
| PUB DATE | 1994-10-00 |
| NOTE | 25p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Department of General Education, Osaka Institute of Technology, Omiya 5-16-1, Asahi-ku, Osaka 535, Japan (300 yen). |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - Non-Classroom (055) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Bilingualism; Cultural Context; Educational Strategies; English; *Family Environment; FLES; Foreign Countries; *Home Study; Instructional Materials; *Native Language Instruction; Parent Influence; Parent Role; Primary Education; *Reading Instruction; Teaching Methods; Time Factors (Learning); *Whole Language Approach |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Biliteracy; Japan |

ABSTRACT

The guide offers practical ideas to bilingual parents wishing to teach and encourage English-language reading while their children are attending Japanese-medium primary schools in Japan. Parents are encouraged to analyze their home language environment, including both spoken and written English use. The author provides anecdotal accounts of his own family language practices and techniques used to alter them. Issues in selecting methods and materials for teaching English reading are discussed, and a number of sources for appropriate reading materials and parent materials are offered. Techniques and advantages of the whole language approach to language learning are examined. The method used by the author and his wife to teach their 8-year-old daughter to read in English is then described. Techniques used included regular family and individual reading activities and writing projects. Contains 39 references. (MSE)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 411 685

Monographs on Bilingualism No.1

# Teaching Children to Read in the Second Language

# 子供達に第二言語で読むことを教えるには

by Craig Smith

A look at the practical side of teaching children to read English while they are attending a Japanese primary school - before it's too late!

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Stephen M Ryan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Produced by the Bilingualism National Special Interest Group of the Japan Association of Language Teachers.



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FL 024737

Monographs on Bilingualism No.1

# Teaching Children to Read in the Second Language

# 子供達に第二言語で読むことを教えるには

by Craig Smith

A look at the practical side of teaching children to read English while they are attending a Japanese primary school - before it's too late!

子供が英語と日本語を自然にしゃべるようになったとしても、日本の学校に通いながら、英語の読み書きが果たして自然にできるようになるでしょうか。カナダの小学校や日本のインターナショナル・スクールで豊かな経験を培い、自分の娘にも家で英語の読み書きを教えたことのあるクレイグ・スミス氏は、この冊子の中でバイリンガルの子供の親に励ましの言葉を送っています。家族の生活ぶりの見直しから始まり、子供の性格に逢合う教え方、子供の英語能力を全体的に伸ばす方法（whole language theory）、教材の提案と注文先、どんな手引書もない領域で教えようとする人（pioneer）の心構えなど、様々なヒントをここに披露しています。

Produced by the Bilingualism National Special Interest Group of the Japan Association of Language Teachers.

© October, 1994. Osaka, Japan.

## Introduction

Teaching your own children to read is well within the realm of parenting. Moms and Dads do not have to enroll in Teacher's College correspondence courses. Expensive reading programs need not be included in the family budget. Kids can learn to read at home in much the same ways they learned spoken language. Using language in contexts which are important to family communication is a natural way to learn to read and write.

Parents have two tremendous strengths as teachers. They can custom design their own curricula and do whatever suits their children. And, collaboration in learning is a well-established part of the parent child relationship.

Parents In bilingual families have additional advantages. Long-lasting motivation can be shared by the whole family. The special awareness of language development which comes from not taking language acquisition for granted can make parents sensitive and patient as they help their children become independent, enthusiastic readers.

Yet the practical aspects of teaching bilingual, bicultural children to read English while they are attending Japanese primary schools cause many parents great concern. Parents worry that they will let their children down. They fear that they do not know the secrets of teaching reading and they hope that somehow their children will intuitively break the code of the printed English word. After all, who can remember learning to read? Anyway, it happened at school, not home, right?

Illustrations by Tami Smith

## Part 1: Getting Started

Parents who have been quite satisfied with their children's developing listening and speaking abilities in English and Japanese may be shocked to discover that a balanced development of reading skills in both languages does not necessarily follow. In the first few years at Japanese primary schools as children become proficient readers in Japanese the challenges of teaching reading in English at home can seem insurmountable. Where can we busy Moms and Dads find the time, not to mention the skills and the patience, to teach our equally busy kids to read well in their other language?

Many parents with bilingual, bicultural family policies dream of their children someday being able to enjoy a university education in either, or both, of their languages. However, by the time a child is in third or fourth grade those hopes can fade if there is a great gap between the reading levels in the child's two languages. The pressure of time is keenly felt. It is not only the pressure of organizing sufficient reading time in each hectic day, week after week, but there is also time pressure of another more frightening sort. Is it possible to learn to read well if the skills, attitudes and experiences are not all in place before adolescence? Parents who grew up with only one language often fear the window of opportunity for learning to read well is open for too short a time and can not imagine how they can help their children do something they themselves did not experience. We may decide to switch our kids to international schools and face the tut-tutting of teachers who pity children deprived of a true mother tongue. Or we may keep our children in Japanese schools, put English reading on hold, and write off the old dreams of complete bilingualism as idealistic.

It would be foolish to take either of these options without testing the strengths of our family bilingual policies by working out a home reading program and giving it a fair trial for at least a year. However, before we make a new reading plan we should have a very careful look at what we are doing at home now. What we think we are doing about language development sometimes is a reflection of our hopes and not the daily realities.

One way to start collecting some information about the home language environment is to keep a journal for a week to record family interaction details. Have one adult try it for the first week, develop a system, explain it to the rest of the family and get everybody involved in keeping records the second week. Find out roughly how much you are talking, listening, reading, and writing to each other. Analyze the nature of that communication. And then think about making changes. It is essential to have some accurate information about language use in your family time in order to set targets that are within reach.

At my house to no-one's surprise we found our mornings were chaotic with an oasis of silence in the middle while we sullenly breakfasted. From the time we got out of bed until the front door slammed our forty-five minutes of family communication was characterized by long periods of silence, very little continuous conversation, switching from one language to the other and back again within single utterances and within exchanges between speakers, the dominant use of Japanese and adult control of most of the communication. We talked mainly about our preparations and the time. The rushing around resulted in a great deal of tension: in other words, situation normal. But situation normal is not good enough when a feature of a bilingual family's time together must be good child-centered communication.

Our language environment is quite clearly inextricably related to life style. So at my house we started to take care of a lot of the routine morning preparations the night before. We packed school bags, laid out clothes, set the breakfast table and did whatever we could in the quiet time at the end of the day to eliminate some of the morning scramble. We set the alarm thirty minutes earlier. And gradually we found ways to use our reconstructed morning time.

We all started using English most of the time. We read messages written the night before on the kitchen whiteboard, we read and added to a family diary and most importantly we started a breakfast read-aloud time.

Like many families our reading aloud had been limited to bedtime. It was such a cozy way to close the day we had never questioned this tradition until we started examining our language environment. Our records revealed a great deal of variation. Sessions varied from several minutes to well over half an hour. Sometimes the

reading stimulated a lot of extra chat and joking and other times it did not. Sometimes child and parent happily shared the reading but it was sometimes an unwelcome chore. The key variable was how soon one or both participants would drift off to sleep. And so we tried reading aloud our favourite stories when we were a little more bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

The time we spend together at the beginning of each day is now much more leisurely, a lot happier, richer in language and child-centered. We made a thorough examination of our language use. We looked for simple ways to restructure our life style to make it communicator-friendly. And we took some steps to improve the reading and the talking about the stories we do in English. Reading is now the centerpiece of our before-school time: it has a calming effect because it focuses everyone's attention on things more important than the trivial worries of selecting clothes and other obsessions exaggerated by racing the clock; it provides a series of interesting things to talk about; the child is at the centre of the communication ; and best of all everyone is alert enough to read, listen and talk about the stories.

Time spent on reading day after day at a good time of the day and positive affective factors are key conditions for learning which will go a long way towards helping our children learn to read well in English. In order to establish good learning conditions we have first got to take an honest look at the current state of family communication. We must also monitor as objectively as possible the results of any changes we make and then make adjustments. Successful parenting in bilingual, bicultural families is a do-it-yourself project.

## Part 2: Methods and Materials

So, on behalf of our kids we've made the grand decision. We want them to have their cake and eat it too. They will be literate in both their languages; not just literate but good readers, readers who love reading in both their languages. There is, however, one rather sticky little catch. We Moms and Dads are going to have to do something about the English bit. We are going to have to keep on doing it for a long, long time and unlike the teaching many of us do in EFL classrooms we are not going to

be able to go back to page one every April. Support is going to be hard to come by. This project will be such an integral part of our parenting that it will likely become a defining characteristic of our families. It will, we hope, like the other challenges of parenthood, be characterized by continuous change which sets the pace for our inventiveness.

How do parents get started, or re-started, with a home English reading program for bilingual children? We need something to read of course but before we arrange to get hold of the reading materials we'd better mull over possible approaches to take in teaching our children to read. If we order our materials first, it is cart before horse. We'd best not let the materials preempt our own decision - making responsibilities. After all, since this is a family-size project we can easily let the needs of the children we love and our hopes guide our decisions about teaching principles. Once we have thought about how our kids will likely learn and how we will best teach, we can start the hunt for books. And whenever we re-evaluate what's happening , not being held back by an official curriculum nor by concerns for a large group of pupils and their parents, we can simply start afresh.

What are some of the fundamental issues that we need to consider? We can usefully frame the problem in terms which are familiar to EFL teachers. Are we going to use a skills-based approach, or a learn-by-doing approach, or some sort of combination? If we believe that teaching reading skills is essential we will be looking for series of basal readers, texts which come along with skills exercises, and phonics materials. The Back to Basics people have the blessing of officialdom on both sides of the Atlantic these days and so materials are pretty easy to come by. **Mari, Inc.**, 1025 25th St., Santa Monica, CA 90403, USA will send an interesting, rather eclectic catalog. If we believe that our children can learn to read by reading we'll want to have access to a lot of well-written, interesting kids literature. **Sundance**, P.O. Box 1326, Littleton, MA 01460 USA is a distributor which sells a great variety of reasonably priced paperbacks from most of the publishers in grade level or theme sets. Or if the third option is our choice, we'll probably feel safest with an integrated reading program which aims at teaching children step by step a set of increasingly complex skills which supports graded reading practice. The **SRA** boxed reading kits

available from **Meynard** which are advertised in *The Language Teacher* are thorough, complete and systematic. We should probably put the shoulder of this JALT interest group to the wheel, talk to the **Foreign Buyers Club**, ask the EFL publishers' representatives for advice and then put out a resource list for parents.

Ideally, our decisions would be based on an understanding of reading theory and reading research. But, like a lot of the decisions we make as parents, we will probably hope well-intentioned choices will serve just as well. Anyway, who knows more about our babies than we do! Right! Right? Well, yes that's true, sort of. We won't have supervisors or other parents breathing down our necks and expecting us to be able to justify everything we do. But we will be face to face with the ultimate tests every day. Can our kids read? Can our kids understand what they are reading? Do they like to read? We must be absolutely certain we can answer these questions and compare our answers one day with the answers we get months later. As we move from reading aloud to our children to teaching them to do the reading, we should be ready to do a bit of professional development ourselves and find out if the experts have anything to say that might spark a needed insight at home. *Reading Strategies: Focus on Comprehension* by Yetta Goodman and Carolyn Burke (Richard C. Owen, 1980), Constance Weaver's *Reading Process and Practice* (Heinemann, 1988) and *Raising Readers: Helping Your Child to Literacy* (Penguin, 1992) by J. Trelease would get a home library off to a good start.

But these writers are not writing for people in our situation. They are not writing about kids who speak English and Japanese and go to primary schools in Japan. And so, the onus is with us. We know our kids as unique individuals and as members of our particular sub-culture. A family reading project requires family-specific plans. In the next section of this monograph a modified Whole Language plan will be discussed and contrasted with predominantly skills-based instruction.

### Part 3: Whole Language Teaching

Decisions, decisions, decisions. Parents make so many decisions on behalf of their children, lots of them about education. We decide where our children will study - in

international schools, in neighbourhood schools, in private schools or at home. We are concerned about what they learn, particularly when the learning occurs at home. Moms and Dads, like it or not, are first and foremost teachers. The where and the what of education clearly are matters for parents to decide in the best interests of their youngsters. However, the how of teaching is quite a different matter. The ways we teach make sense only if there are relationships to the ways children learn. If you believe the how of learning lies within the child, whole language teaching is for you.

Whole language teaching is not an adult view of how adult language should be passed on to children. It is a cooperative effort in which teachers support children as they learn by themselves and for themselves. The teacher need not impose and structure but should observe and nurture. The whole language approach to teaching reading keeps language in whole contexts, integrates reading, writing, speaking and listening activities and promotes understanding of whole meaning units, not components, first. It is a learn-by-doing and do-by-thinking approach which demands intellectual and emotional engagement with the text.

Phonics drills, spelling lists, word identification exercises, grammar study, controlled-vocabulary readers and demands for perfect oral reading are not preplanned, separate units in good whole language reading programmes. And furthermore, if you are an EFL teacher a good rule of thumb might be: the practices of your workplace could be hazardous to your child's growth as a reader.

Linda Crafton's book for primary school teachers, *Whole Language: Getting Started Moving Forward* (Richard C. Owen, 1991), introduces whole language philosophy and has loads of practical suggestions which can be used at home too. Diane Stephen's book (also Richard C. Owen, 1991) will give some reason to be confident in the use of this approach with your own dear ones. It's called *Research on Whole Language: Support for a New Curriculum*, even though there is a lot that is old about whole language teaching.

A whole language approach addresses three areas of special concern to parents teaching their bilingual children who attend Japanese primary schools to read in English : the difference of sound-symbol correspondence in the child's two languages, the threat of reading anxiety and the problem of getting the most out of the time you

have to read together. When we teach children who already read each word (even words they do not know) of *hiragana* texts we may be tempted to systematically teach English phonic skills and other word attack strategies. If at crucial early stages we focus attention on the surface structures of individual words, in effect we are teaching kids to read the way poor readers do. Instead of taking advantage of the transfer of higher reading skills and positive attitudes we make reading unnecessarily demanding. The anxiety children feel makes successful reading less likely. Children who speak two languages may be very sensitive when learning to read if they read one of their languages more fluently than the other. Signs of failure may threaten self-identity, especially when the language role model parent is also the teacher.

Time spent in battle with basal readers armed with word attack skills would be much more productively spent reading. Make reading aloud to your child the basis for all you do. The child should share in the reading aloud only when you are sure of reasonable success. Ask questions that promote successful reading. Encourage the use of contextual clues, background knowledge, logical predictions, and imaginative guessing to find answers. Develop and negotiate answers by asking follow up clarification and elaboration questions. Start writing and drawing projects based on the stories. Provide opportunities for silent and private reading. Read for different purposes: learn-to-read, read-to-learn, and read-for-fun. Read and read and read until it becomes a natural part of your relationship

Cooperative participation in the natural language development of your child can not help but teach you both more about each other, the best way to enhance parent-child relationships.

"Emergent reader" is a term used to describe pre-beginners. It would be better yet to think that our children are involved in a long process of emerging as readers. The secret is to keep on emerging as parents. We have to ask our kids to be patient with us.

## Part 4: Learning to Read In English at Home

A description of one week's efforts in teaching an eight year old girl, who attends her neighbourhood primary school in Kobe, to read in English at home will show what happens to theories about raising kids bilingually when we actually try to live with them. Admittedly, a list of one week's activities is not much of an indication of eight years of language development but I suspect you Moms and Dads will have quite a good idea of the journey we've been on.

There are a few basic principles that my wife and I agreed on just after our daughter, Tami, was born that, in retrospect, have served us well and kept us on track when we were lazy, the times when nothing seemed to be going very well, and especially during protracted quarrels over the means of achieving our goals. We had agreed that although we wanted our daughter to be bilingual, her main language and the language of her education would be Japanese as long as we were living in Japan; we would make English a part of her life each and every day; and that the development of skills in two languages at the same time must first and foremost build her self-esteem.

We started planning our English week when we started to teach Tami to read in English when she was six years old. She had told us she wanted to be a good reader in English and she had started trying to read by herself. Until then the only thing resembling planning was an occasional monitoring of our communication patterns to make sure we knew what we were doing with the two languages in our home. Even since, our planning has been simple and done one week at a time with only vague outlines of what we hope to be doing in a month's or a half year's time. This is because the main part of our reading plan is, and has always been, reading aloud a wide variety of the best children's literature. There are two questions we always ask, "Can she understand?", and "Is she enjoying herself?"

The key to our plan is time, enough time to get something done and not so much that it makes life hectic. We use two hours a day and we do our best to make sure we spend the time productively, reading our books, writing our own stories, or talking about what we're doing - forty-five minutes in the morning and an hour and a

quarter at night. The only rule we set is that we stick to this schedule. This rule is a secret one for my wife and I, not for Tami. In this way we don't put constant pressure on her which she would relate to reading in English. A readily observable natural law of parenting reveals a lot about rule making. When parents break a rule not nearly as much sound and fury is generated as when kids break the same rule.

Ways to Read

Every week we choose one book and Tami chooses as many as she likes during the week one by one. We also choose one activity which will be based on the main book which is read during morning read aloud time. Recently we read *The Terrible Tryouts* from the "Bad News Ballet" series by Jahanna Malcolm (Scholastic, 1989). This book is a little too difficult for Tami to read independently but she can follow the words when read to and sometimes share in the reading. The previous week an amusing phrase, "Courtney's nostrils flared," struck her fancy and we read the book again so we could list favourite lines in our reading notebook. It is not unusual for young children to enjoy reading the same book many times and in fact many of the books Tami chooses for herself are old familiar ones from a wide range of reading levels, more often than not well within her ability to read them on her own. The week we re-read the ballet book, she chose *Cam Jansen and the Mystery at the Monkey House* (Dell, 1985), *Mrs. Piggle Wiggle* (Harper Trophy, 1985), *A Gift For Tia Rosa* (Bantam, 1991), *Cream of Creature from the School Cafeteria* (Avon Camelot, 1985), *Nate the Great and the Missing Key* (Dell, 1982), *Nate the Great and the Phony Clue* (Dell, 1985), *Molly's Pilgrim* (Bantam, 1990), *Chocolate Fever* (Dell, 1978), and *The Best Christmas Pagent Ever* (Harper Trophy, 1988). By making her own choices she sets her own pace.

We read in five ways. First, we read aloud to our daughter. This is the way Tami talks most about the stories. She comments about characters, asks about words and talks about things the stories remind her of. She lets us know in these ways whether she understands or not and then we can figure out what we should do to encourage her.

The second way we read is often a time for mini-lessons. We share the reading aloud by taking turns. Recently, when I asked Tami to read the next paragraph she

asked what a paragraph was. I had already answered that question several times and I guessed she was just checking or that perhaps she wanted to know why writers make paragraphs and I had been telling her how to recognize one. She also gets a mini-lesson if she misreads a word in a way not in keeping with the meaning of the story. We encourage the use of a beginning letter or sound, or picture and story cues to read the word. But otherwise, we plan to leave all the so-called language skills that do not need to be dealt with naturally in the course of our reading until she is a sophisticated, analytical adolescent absolutely enthralled by word derivations and gerunds or just desperate to pass tests.

Tami reads silently in three ways: she reads silently with a parent beside her ready to talk or help, she reads alone and she reads as she listens to audio tapes. It's not so tough to find the time if we put a lock on the tube (except for videos ) and we don't waste time filling in the blanks on work sheets.

Reading Connections

We also have one writing project each week. For example, Tami drew a picture of the ballet teacher, Miss Jo, in *Terrible Tryouts*. There are no pictures in the book so we had to hunt for the word pictures of Miss Jo. Then, she wrote a letter explaining the picture to her grandmother in Canada. She made two copies of the picture, one for her own ballet teacher and one for her grandmother here who teaches another sort of dance and she kept a copy of the letter for her reading notebook. She often asks for help with spelling in letters and sometimes refers to letters from her cousins for aid. With other types of writing she doesn't seem to fret much about accuracy.

There are several routines we follow which sometimes are related to what we are reading but usually are not. We write messages on a big whiteboard in our kitchen, one to be read first thing in the morning and another when she comes home from school. She writes her own messages whenever she likes and she often proofreads her whiteboard work over the course of several hours without asking us about it. Our messages seem wildly hilarious to us but we suspect they might seem a bit weird to others. She also keeps a sort of private diary of pictures, aquarium tickets and the like, and jottings which she says are records of the day, stories and songs. We also

write a public family journal of whatever we want to write with an emphasis on expression of feelings. No one makes corrections. We try to write at least three pages a week.

The key elements of our rough but ready plan might serve as a guideline for you to make comparisons with what you do. We read aloud a lot to set the tone and conditions for learning; we make connections between reading and writing; we spend most of our time on reading rather than on learning reading skills in isolation but we focus on specific needs in mini-lessons; our aim in reading is always to understand what the author wants to say; the child chooses many of her own texts ; and the activities are ones that are natural family activities. Most importantly, we try to be good observers and adjust what we do to what we see. It is a task that quite often demands more patience and perseverance than we can muster. I hear someone saying, "Try it with two or three kids ! "

## Part 5: Pioneer Parenting

Pioneers explore uncharted territory, draught maps for others to follow, brave hardships in a quest for goals which they dream will make life better. Irrational behaviour. Yet without the irrational force of a dream to drive them on it is unlikely many hopeful pioneers would pass the point of no return, the point at which it is harder to return than to go on. Even so, it is certain they often curse their travel mates blaming them for the tribulations suffered at the whims of the unknown devils of the wilderness while secretly wishing for the familiar demons of home.

The point of no return for bicultural pioneers is the arrival of the heirs. Then we pioneer on towards a dream of our children doing effortlessly in two languages and two cultures what we parents brave as the hardships of coping in our second worlds. Some of us think the natural way, or the only practical way, of achieving this goal is to leave the Japanese end of things up to the local public education system and teach the other language at home. Our pioneering life may easily be seen as teaching work: that is, besides being Moms and Dads we should be teachers and it follows then, our children will have a second role as our students.

But we must take care if we try to turn our living rooms into classrooms. Even though parenting involves a great deal of teaching, many of the lessons best learned by our kids are probably the ones we do not plan. We are not likely aware of, nor always in control of, the most effective teaching we do. Home teaching will only work if it fits naturally within our life-styles. If we try to impose lessons that have little to do with the way we live, only the most stubborn of us will be able to persevere. Home teaching which depends on a relationship unlike the real parent-child relationship will likely be a lifeless affair. Our children need us first as parents not as teachers, and certainly not as language teachers in the formal sense.

Good families come in many styles. Two-language two-culture families may wish to make all or some of their members bilingual and bicultural or they might not worry much about it. Some may try and fall short of high standards. It is not reasonable to expect families to dedicate themselves to certain goals simply because the potential exists. Kids from happy families will not curse their parents if they are

monolingual adults. However, the therapists of those who were kids in other families may point the finger if their patients make involuntary moaning sounds every time they hear a certain language.

Parents who were raised in different cultures and speak different first languages often find that their pioneering work is making one happy family out of a two-language two-culture family. Language may not have as much to do with this as culture. Unless of course, one parent cannot say much to some or all of the other members of the family.

The onus in this case is surely with the parents to do something about their own language skills. More importantly, the parents must make sure the children do not feel they are to blame for poor family communication. We know all too well that children can be thrown into confusion by problems which are their parents' problems but become a part of family life. We should not leave our wee ones in a lonely struggle to make sense of their world. It's up to parents to make it clear where their youngsters belong. One way to ensure good family communication and to secure the children's sense of belonging to the world their parents have put them in is to help them learn the languages of both parents. This is why some of us bicultural pioneers are teaching our children to read in English at home after they have packed away their Japanese homework in their smart red and black school bags. Good family communication. Kids who know just where they belong. These lofty goals require more love than cleverness and more time than technique.

We start teaching our children to read from the day we startle our friends who are not parents by adding babbling and cooing noises for both sides of the conversations we have with our new babies. The wiggling and waggling of foreheads, eyebrows, ears, noses and fingers only make these early lessons more opaque to the uninitiated. Friends shake their heads at the rapidity of the transformation when they find us reading aloud to tiny babies who obviously could have no idea what pigs, princesses or porridge could possibly be. Common sense lost. Paradise gained. No tough pioneering here.

But we do need time, lots of time, preferably when the whole family is awake. Time with the family is for many of us in Japan a luxury awfully hard to come by.

Hardy pioneers muster up the courage to say no to demands for time they want to spend with their kids. Pioneer parents may have to do some creative accounting to balance family budgets when large expenditures of family time reduce financial income.

The trail our families journey along to biliteracy is not totally uncharted. It just seems so sometimes. Mary Noguchi and Stephen Ryan and an increasingly large group of other contributors have generously offered the members of the Bilingualism N-Sig, and so theoretically every member of JALT, access to an impressive library, The Bilingual Resource. The **Bilingualism N-Sig** is itself an ideal support group. **The Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese** is another association which provides a way to get in touch with some bicultural pioneers. And in spite of the special characteristics of two-language families who have one parent living in a foreign culture we do have a great deal in common with garden-variety monolingual one-culture families, particularly those who face the challenges of nurturing family members with special needs.

There are three reasons why we may feel that raising kids to be biliterate is far more of a pioneering task than it actually is. First in our hearts is the strong doubt that someone else's experience applies to our own families in areas not only closely related to our fragile self-identities but also dependent on the interaction of the unique personalities in each family.

Second, not much of the literature is specifically about raising children bilingually in Japan. How do we in Japan deal with languages which have such different written forms? Are there certain approaches which might be successful for many children? For example, should we let children become successful hiragana readers before they begin to try to become independent English readers?

Another issue of local concern that affects minority language use is racism. The threat of racism is not faced only by bicultural families living in Japan but its manifestations, our children's reactions, and each parent's ability to recognize and respond to it may differ in important ways from bicultural families in other parts of the world. Many of the families described in the literature are not physically recognizable minorities where they live. Two cultures, two languages but not two

races. There is absolutely no doubt that if children feel badly or are confused about the racial facts of their lives their minority language or bicultural growth will be affected. Whatever the impact, it is likely to occur at times crucially important to language development, such as when children first meet lots of strangers at school. We would like to think that unusual attention paid to our children is good if it is not obviously hostile. We like to believe we always know how our children feel. Sorry folks, but try to remember what you did not tell your own Mothers and Fathers about some of the hurtful experiences which influenced your childhood. Sobering thought, isn't it !

The third reason we may feel isolated is the Pollyanna philosophy that comes along with the description of successfully bicultural families in much of the literature. Unrealistic optimism does not offer much long term refuge from the hurt inflicted by the gloomier of amateur applied linguists who like to remind us that half of two languages does not add up to one. They do not award much more credit to one and a half languages. The missing bit in each case is, of course, literacy.

There are three common types of Pollyanna thinking which are particularly depressing for some of us klutz couples. One. 'You can do it if you only try hard enough.' We who have tried pretty hard already are not cheered much by this smug advice. Two. 'Never show any signs of impatience or irritation when things do not go well.' Got that? Try to remember it. And the name of the first parent whose children submit the proper certified documents will be recorded in the *Guiness Book of Records*. If you are Roman Catholic tell the kids to send the papers straight to the Vatican. Three. 'Reading in two languages does not seem to be a major problem.' What a relief that is ! Surprisingly though, reading in one language can be a major problem. Just ask the teachers in Canada, the UK, the USA, etc., etc., etc. These three gripes aside, the literature on bilingualism does provide more than enough encouragement, lots of food for thought and useful examples of what some families have tried in the effort to turn their dreams into realities.

What we need, in addition, is some frank talk with other pioneers in our situation about how we might recover from our regular crises. Maps that show the right trail are not quite enough if it is a grueling struggle or an impossible path for many others

to follow. All of us, parents and kids, need each other not so much as role models but more as soul mates. For inspiration of the how-to type there are two bodies of practical literature, the books on the Bilingual Resource list and first language reading teachers' resource books. And of course, we can all help by mapping and sharing some of our own journeys.

The more support the merrier because we all have moments when being a parent seems unfairly tough and, much to our surprise, scary. Who asked to be a pioneer anyway? We were just swept away by romance. Remember? And now we've got all these kids who just keep sweeping us along the pioneer trail.

## A Bibliography

Most of these books can be borrowed from The Bilingual Resource. Contact: Stephen Ryan, Department of General Education, Osaka Institute of Technology, Omiya, Asahi-ku, Osaka, 〒535.


### Getting Started

Goodman, Y. and Burke, C. (1980). *Reading Strategies: Focus on Comprehension*. New York: Richard Owen.

Trelease, J. (1992). *Raising Readers: Helping Your Child to Literacy*. New York: Peguin.

Weaver, C. (1988). *Reading Process and Practice*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

### Whole Language Teaching

Crafton, L. (1991). *Whole Language: Getting Started Moving Forward*. New York: Richard Owen.

Stephens, D. (Ed.), (1991). *Research on Whole Language: Support for a New Curriculum*. New York: Richard Owen.

### Further Reading

Andersson, T. (1981). *A Guide to Family Reading in Two Languages. The Preschool Years*. Los Angeles: California State University.

Appel, R. and Muksken, P. (1987). *Language Contact And Bilingualism*. London: Edward Arnold.

Arnberg, L. (1987). *Raising Children Bilingually: The Pre-school Years*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Arnold, H. (1982). *Listening to Children Reading*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Barton, D. (1994). *Literacy*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Beard, R. (Ed.). (1993). *Teaching Literacy Balancing Perspectives*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Bialystok, E. (Ed.). (1991). *Language Processing in Bilingual Children*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brewster, J., Ellis, G., and Girard, D. (1992). *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. London: Penguin.

Britton, J. (1993). *Language and Learning*. Second Edition. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Campbell, R. (1992) *Reading Real Books*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Chall, J. (1983). *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*. (Updated Edition). New York: McGraw - Hill.

Clark, E. (Ed.) (1993). *The Proceedings of the Twenty - fourth Annual Child Language Research Forum*. Stanford: Center for the Study of Language and Information.

Crystal, D. (1986). *Child Language, Learning and Linguistics*. London: Edward Arnold.

Elliot, A. (1981). *Child Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, G. and Brewster, J. (1991). *The Storytelling Handbook for Primary Teachers*. London: Penguin.

Harding, E. and Riley, P. (1986). *The Bilingual Family*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Harris, M. and Coltheart, M. (1986). *Language Processing in Children and Adults*. London: Routledge.

Heilman, A., Blair, T., and Rupley, W. (1986). *Principles and Practices of*

*Teaching Reading*. Colombus: Charles Merrill.

Hennings, D. (1986). *Communication in Action: Teaching the Language Arts*. Dallas: Houghton Mifflin.

Hyltenstam, K. and Obler, K. (Eds.), (1989). *Bilingualism Across the Lifespan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Meek, M. (1992). *On Being Literate*. London: The Bodley Head.

Mills, R.W. and Mills, J. (1993). *Bilingualism in the Primary School*. London: Routledge.

Mogford, K., and Sadler, J. (Eds.), (1989). *Child Language Disabilty*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Moon, C. and Raban, B. (1992). *A Question of Reading* (National Curriculum Edition). London: David Fulton.

Saunders, G. ( 1989 ). *Bilingual Children: From Birth to Teens*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Saville, M. and Troike, R. (1971) *Handbook of Bilingual Education*. Washington: TESOL.

Schonell, F. J. and Goodacre, E. (1994). *The Psychology and Teaching of Reading*. (Fifth Edition). Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd.

Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1981). *Bilingualism or Not*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Smith, F. (1985). *Reading*. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Stierer, B. and Maybin, J. (Eds.), (1994). *Language, Literacy and Learning in Educational Practice*.Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Stephens, D. Ed.), (1990). *What Matters ? A Primer For Teaching Reading*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Trelease, J. (1985). *The Read Aloud Handbook*. (Third Edition). New York: Penguin.

Wells, G. and Chang-Wells G.L., (1992). *Constructing Knowledge Together*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Williams, J., and Snipper, G.C. (1990). *Literacy and Bilingualism*. New York; Longman.

## The Author

Craig Smith began his teaching career as a primary school teacher in Toronto. He has also taught in public schools in New Zealand, Australia and Indonesia. He has been a reading teacher for children at an international school in Japan, for many bilingual Japanese children who have lived overseas, and for children from bilingual, bicultural families. He enjoys reading with children more than any other sort of teaching.

Yoko, Tami and Craig Smith

このモノグラフは、全国語学教育学会バイリンガリスム研究部会が作り出したシリーズの一つです。この部会はバイリンガリズムの調査計画や調査多角化を促進することを目的にしています。また、会員間の相互援助の基盤となる場所を提供します。

このモノグラフの原典はもともとBilingual Japan 、この部会のニュースレター、に連載されていました。それを広報委員、Mary Goebel Noguchi, Kathy Yamane とStephen M. Ryan がモノグラフの形にしました。

バイリンガリズム 部会 とその出版物に関するさらに詳しい情報がお知りになりたい方は、Mary Goebel Noguchi、〒610-03京都府綴喜郡田辺町草内山科５６－１９(FAX: 07746-3-6003)、までご連絡下さい。

This monograph is one of a series produced by the Bilingualism National Special Interest Group of the Japan Association of Language Teachers. The group aims to encourage research projects into bilingualism and to disseminate their findings. It also acts as a base for mutual support between group members.

The text of this monograph originally appeared in serialised form in the pages of *Bilingual Japan*, the bi-monthly newsletter of the group. It was produced in monograph form by the Publications Board: Mary Goebel Noguchi, Kathleen Yamane and Stephen M. Ryan.

For further information about the Bilingualism N-Sig and its publications, please contact: Mary Goebel Noguchi, 56-19 Yamashina Kusauchi, Tanabe-cho, Tsuzuki-gun, Kyoto 〒610-03 (FAX: 07746-3-6003).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE